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ABSTRACT

The higher education panel of the Commission on the Future of Education in Delaware was charged by the governor with three major reviewing tasks: (1) the status of state-level educational administration to determine how well it can meet needs at that time and in the future; (2) the method used to determine postsecondary funding levels and introduction of new and continuing degree programs; and (3) the way in which Delaware meets its citizens' education needs and how to expand that outreach. The commission recommended that: functions concerning postsecondary education be consolidated under a proposed coordinating board rather than remain segmented; the Technical and Community College be allowed to retain tuition receipts as the other two institutions do; all institutions use the same budget format; no additional cabinet-form administration for postsecondary education be created; adult basic education be a responsibility of the coordinating board; and state and institutional data collection be standardized and done regularly. (MSE)

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Higher Education Panel

Commission on the Future of Education in Delaware

FINAL REPORT

6 December 1977

The Higher Education Panel of the Commission on the Future of Education in Delaware held ten meetings between August 29 and December 20, 1977. Members of the Panel were:

Mr. Kenneth M. Smith, Commission Chairman
Dr. Nicholas LeTang, Panel Chairman
Mr. Walter M. Kearney
Ms. Dee Lafferty
Mr. Robert H. McBride
Dr. George B. McGorman
Mr. Hugh Martin V
Mr. Andrew G. T. Moore II
Ms. Esthelda Selby
Mr. Eldridge Waters

The Governor's charges to the Commission which are addressed to the Higher Education Panel are as follows.

1. A most careful review of the status of the administration of education at the state level. Specifically, the Commission is requested to review the methods of administration of education at the state level to determine if they meet the needs of the people of the state at the present and will likely meet their needs for the foreseeable future. Within this review the Governor has requested careful consideration of the Cabinet form of administration as he promised to do during the campaign.

2. In higher education, this review should also focus on the method used to determine the priorities for funding levels for postsecondary education and the means used to determine approval for the introductions of new and continuing degree programs.

3. "The reach of education." Specifically, for both panels to review the current status of how education meets the needs of Delaware's citizens and whether any suggestions might be forthcoming as to how to expand that reach to be sure that all citizens are getting the education they deserve.

HE 015 547

The Panel devoted a great deal of its time receiving and reviewing information and opinions submitted in written and oral presentations. Public and private college representatives, state officials and national experts provided input for the Panel's consideration. The Panel constantly burdened the postsecondary institutions with requests for information. The patience and responsiveness of institutional representatives in this regard has been commendable.

Members of the Panel were also briefed about findings of previously existing commissions and study groups which dealt with postsecondary education in the State.

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State Administrative Structure

In terms of overall state administration comparative summaries of structures in the fifty states were offered on several different occasions. In each case the prominent points were that a great variety of statewide administrative structures exists, that the trend has been from voluntary association to strong state mechanisms for coordination and administration, and that Delaware has one of the weakest structures in terms of control, authorities, or participation in determining direction of higher education.

It is noteworthy that early in the course of the Commission on the Future of Education, the Delaware Postsecondary Education Commission, Delaware's only statewide structure, was reorganized and given greater responsibilities and authorities.

The Panel recognizes that there are two areas of concern involving state administration. The first deals with those responsibilities that are exclusively matters of state, and cannot be interpreted as institutional responsibilities. Examples in this area are laws and regulations and enforcement thereof dealing with licensing or approval for postsecondary institutions operating or planning to operate in the state, and federal program management for various state grant programs.

The Panel finds that Delaware's approach to these kinds of responsibilities has been segmental, with no single agency designated to handle or coordinate state higher education affairs.

RECOMMENDATION: The Panel recommends that, to the extent possible the State move in the direction of consolidating present and future State postsecondary functions within the proposed coordinating board.

The second area of concern involving state administration involves the state's interaction with postsecondary institutions. The relationship between the State and each of the three institutions with respect to budget submissions, accountability and general regulation differs greatly.

If the State's posture in seeking information and setting budgetary specifications for the University can be termed too weak, then the State's posture in setting salary increases and staff positions through budgetary action, and retaining tuition from Delaware Technical and Community College can be termed too strong.

The issue of how much state involvement is too little or too much is not specifically delineated by the Panel. It is felt generally that independent control and operation of Delaware institutions of higher education by citizen boards of trustees has been beneficial, educationally sound, and cost effective to the State. The Panel clearly recognizes the dangers inherent in total state management of higher education, and does not recommend a regulatory or governing board. The Panel also recognizes that when tax dollars are used to support institutions for the public good, the State then has a responsibility to insure that the public good is served by those institutions in the most efficient and effective manner.

The Panel's specific recommendations for statewide administration and extent of relationship with institutions are presented below as recommendations for a state coordinating board. At a more specific level relative to institutional relationship, the Panel finds the following.

The State budget format (especially in terms of the amount of information presented) varies among the three public institutions.

Delaware Technical and Community College submits its budget in a standard "state agency format" and submits tuition payments as General Fund receipts, as other state agencies do. Both the University of Delaware and Delaware State College submit budgets which are less detailed, and retain tuition receipts as institutional funds.

Little comparability across the three institutions exists. The University utilizes standard university and college accounting categories for reporting information. Although Delaware State College uses those standard categories internally, most information reported for State budget purposes is converted to meet State accounting code categories.

The major differences among the three institutions relative to State appropriations would seem to have less to do with the actual budget presentation format than with the flexibility available to the institutions after State appropriations have been determined. In this regard, the University, with the greatest portion of "non-state" funds, is most flexible; Delaware Technical and Community College is least flexible.

RECOMMENDATION: The Panel recommends that Delaware Technical and Community College be allowed to retain tuition receipts as the other two institutions do, with appropriate adjustments to their budget.

The college's budget requests may very well tell us less than we would like to know about programs and services; but this problem would seem to be one centered on the State budget format in general, rather than on the colleges specifically.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the three institutions utilize the same budget format. The accepted format should be one appropriate to postsecondary institutions' standard accounting practices, while at the same time one that provides information required by State decision makers. It is specifically recommended that publicly supported postsecondary institutions not be subject to line item appropriations by individual campus and specifically designated personnel in the budget.

Board of Regents Proposal

During the life-span of the Commission, and apparently to some extent as a reaction to the Commission, the University, along with Delaware State College and Delaware Technical and Community College publicly announced a proposal for coordination of public higher education in Delaware.

The Higher Education Panel followed this "Board of Regents proposal," received a formal presentation from the President of the Council of Presidents, and raised several questions attempting to clarify specific parts of the proposal. Further, a committee appointed by the Commission's chairman met with the presidents and board chairmen of the three public colleges, to offer suggestions and comments which grew out of Panel discussions.

The Panel generally applauded the central conviction of the Board of Regents proposal - that some coordination of budgeting and program offerings in higher education was needed. It did, however, raise several vital questions about the proposed structure and specific operational procedures tied to the proposal.

After careful study and lengthy discussion the Panel arrived at the conclusion that a state board for coordination of postsecondary education would indeed be a valuable mechanism for overall state coordination and for addressing on a continuing basis the several issues raised in the present report.

The need for coordination in higher education does not seem to be disputed. A report submitted in 1970 by the Coordinating Committee for the Study of Education, established during the Peterson administration (E. A. Trabant, Chairman), recommended that a Coordinator of Higher Education be hired to serve as an employee of the Council of Presidents; and that this coordinator represent higher and continuing education on the Governor's Cabinet.

In 1976 the Higher Education Advisory Commission, established during the Tribbitt administration (R. L. Sutten, Chairman) recommended a Board of Review, consisting of nine members to be appointed three each by the three boards of trustees of the state institutions. The Commission's report further recommended that the Governor designate a single member of the administration who would be responsible for the Executive Branch's review of higher education funding requests.

While it would seem that general agreement about coordination obtains, questions about the composition and scope of a coordinating mechanism generate differences. The Panel reached concensus on several points relative to coordinating board structure and scope, as follows.

RECOMMENDATION: The State of Delaware should establish a board, which would have as its purpose the coordination of postsecondary education in the State. The board should be established by statute and should be based on the following key points:

- The total membership of the coordinating board should include from 9 to 15 individuals

- The majority of the board members should not have concurrent association with any postsecondary institution; this majority should be appointed by the Governor and be confirmed by the Senate for six year staggered terms

- The minority of the members would be trustees selected as representatives by specific state supported postsecondary institutions and one representative of independent colleges appointed by the Governor.

Members in this category would be confirmed by the Senate and should not be institutional presidents

- The chairman of the board should be selected by the Governor, and serve at his pleasure

- Board membership should be based on qualifications, interest and dedication rather than on political and geographic considerations

- The scope of the board's responsibilities should include the statewide planning function for all forms of postsecondary endeavor including nonprofit and proprietary programs

- The specific responsibilities of the board should include:

  a) The consolidation of all postsecondary program functions currently administered by other State agencies

  b) The Federal program and planning functions of the Postsecondary Education Commission

  c) Authority for budget review, analysis and coordination of State supported postsecondary institutions

  d) Authority for program review with specific responsibilities in the area of approval for new degree granting programs, review of new program proposals from the State supported postsecondary institutions, and coordination of programs of Adult Basic Education

  e) Authority for coordination of State appropriations for student financial aid

Cabinet Form of Administration

The Governor requested that the Commission on the Future of Education give careful consideration to the Cabinet form of administration as it pertains to education. One benefit that might accrue from the establishment of a Cabinet Secretary for Education might be an overall perspective of education in the State.

This, again, is an issue raised in the previously cited 1970 report. The question raised at that time was:

> "What kind of a mechanism should be set up to insure that at least informally some individual or group representing the broad educational establishment is looking at the whole of the State's educational program for people from 3 to 65?"
>
> "How can we begin to look at the whole educational process in a meaningful way so that we can address outselves to priority items on the perimeter and eliminate outdated programs?"

The answer provided by the 1970 committee was to create by statute a State Council on Educational Planning consisting of 24 members who would represent various educational institutions and associations in the State.

The present Higher Education Panel, in answering a similar question, considered four basic models for state administration (along with variations of each). Three of these models included a Secretary of Education. The Panel felt strongly that other than the recommended coordinating board, no further changes in structure, including the specific proposal for a Secretary of Education, was deemed necessary.

Having recommended that a coordinating board for higher education be established, the Panel foresees that with the existence of two education boards, one for K-12 education and one for higher education, some form of coordination would be essential. As a minimum, the two boards should meet formally twice each year to review the whole of education in the State and, when appropriate, submit a joint report and/or recommendation to the General Assembly and the Governor.

Reach of Postsecondary Education

Issues related to the reach of postsecondary education are several, and the time constraints for the Panel precluded a detailed examination of each. Three points, however, should be addressed.

Economic Access

While a general comment about the need for student assistance grants would be supported by most knowledgeable educators, specific data about total unmet financial need among potential postsecondary students and about the relationships among tuition pricing, disposable income, Federal student aid, loans and State grants-in-aid are not immediately available. The availability of postsecondary education regardless of economic condition is an important goal, and progress toward that goal should be measured. A coordinating board for higher education would address this issue on a continuing basis.

Breadth of Programs

The variety of postsecondary programs that can be supported within a small state is limited. In the course of information presentations it has been noted that one possible effect of declining enrollments at postsecondary institutions might be the reduction of breadth of degree offerings.

With limited postsecondary programs in the State, consideration must be given to meeting the needs of Delawareans whose professional goals demand attendance at out-of-state institutions.

Presently Delaware makes certain contributions aimed at addressing this problem (DIMER, DIVME, OIA, Scholarships). The specific programs have been developed individually, but it would seem appropriate for the State to examine this issue comprehensively - in terms of overall philosophy and specific needs. Again, this issue would be one addressed by the coordinating board.

Adult Basic Education

The area of adult basic education (ABE) presents some concerns to the Panel. The subject matter content of ABE is that usually associated with

elementary schools - basic skills. The population involved in ABE is that usually associated with postsecondary institutions - adult.

Presently ABE (and beyond that, training for GED or high school equivalency certification) is offered at colleges, in school districts, and in a variety of organizations and institutions. Federal funds supportive of ABE are distributed through the State Board of Education, primarily to school districts. Students working at Federally funded centers are charged only a nominal fee, while those learning basic skills in non-supported centers - specifically Delaware Technical and Community College - are being charged tuition.

Questions concerning the appropriateness of college-based ABE programs or school district-based ABE programs and the companion issues of funding distribution and coordination were raised before the Panel.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that adult basic education be a responsibility of the coordinating board.

Mission/Priorities/Institutional/State Interaction

Each public institution seems to have a clear notion of its mission and direction; but members of the Panel have found it difficult at times to pull the various missions and directions into a composit, and were often unable to resolve issues related to overlapping functions and responsibilities.

The Panel received a great deal of information from the three public institutions relative to program priority establishment, students served, trends and projections. The Panel finds that the State indeed has three distinct public institutions and each institution has its own distinct manner of presenting information - varying from comprehensive statistical presentations and projections to conceptual frameworks and general or specific mandates and charges. Further, independent colleges are likewise unique in their missions and in their delivery of information. The Panel's thirst for data comparable across institutions remains unsatiated.

RECOMMENDATION: The State, if it is to understand clearly and deal constructively with the postsecondary establishment, must construct and collect on a continuing basis comparable data from all of Delaware's postsecondary institutions. The Panel cautions, however, against overburdening institutions with a continuing stream of requests of varying levels of importance. It specifically recommends that the coordinating board serve as a state level base for postsecondary education, utilizing presently existing data collection mechanisms such as the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) already standardized and completed by all postsecondary institutions on an annual basis.

Staff

It is recognized that the proposed coordinating board would require a minimal staff. It was recommended that to the greatest extent possible, data collection to fulfill its coordinating role in oversight, review and analysis should be carried out using staff of the postsecondary institutions to minimize the need for new, permanent, state level staff.

CHARGE TO: THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN DELAWARE

The areas requested for review by the Commission on the Future of Education include the following:

1. A most careful review of the status of the administration of education at the state level. Specifically, the Commission is requested to review the methods of administration of education at the state level to determine if they meet the needs of the people of the state at the present and will likely meet their needs for the foreseeable future. Within this review the Governor has requested careful consideration of the Cabinet form of administration as he promised to do during the campaign.

2. In higher education, this review should also focus on the method used to determine the priorities for funding levels for postsecondary education and the means used to determine approval for the introductions of new and continuing degree programs.

3. "The reach of education." Specifically, for both panels to review the current status of how education meets the needs of Delaware's citizens and whether any suggestions might be forthcoming as to how to expand that reach to be sure that all citizens are getting the education they deserve.

4. For the K-12 panel, a review of the methods, progress and time tables established for the implementation of "competency based education" as approved by the State Board of Education. The need to insure the ability of Delaware students to make their way competently into society is of great concern and the Commission is charged with the instructions to review the progress of the State Board's plan for achieving this through competency based education.

5. The K-12 panel should also take a look at the effects of declining enrollments in the public school systems. These effects would include the effect on the total educational program of declining funding due to declining enrollments as well as any recommendations as to how to best utilize the prospective vacant school buildings.

6. The K-12 panel is requested to review the status of the state's position and support for the maintenance of discipline in the public school system and providing recommendations it deems necessary as to how to improve this situation in the most practical, efficient and equitable manner possible.

It is important to keep these topics in mind, since they are the ones that we will have to spend our time on reviewing in order to meet the deadlines of December 15 for a preliminary report and January 15 for a final report to the Governor. It is, however, within our realm to consider what further study needs to be done on other topics not included in those charged to this Commission or facets of them that we are unable to get to.

KMS/jmc
August 19, 1977